

where, viz., generalisation. For example, when he states that the angles of the Corinthian abacus are cut off, he states what is the general rule, but which, told as if there were no exception, would, to a student who referred to "Stuart's Athens," create some little difficulty. In like manner the same student reading that the pilasters "are never placed consecutively," and having one of the plates of the "Erechtheion," before him, might entertain an erroneous opinion of the writer's knowledge of his subject.

Mr. Leeds has examined most of the theories current on the orders, and has generally mentioned with fairness such as his disapproves of, and certainly he has in many cases given very plausible explanations of some difficult questions. He is not altogether just to the labours of those who have investigated the curved lines of the Parthenon, and we so far differ with him, as to consider that the ante, which he states do not diminish, had their actual, though slight diminution, given them for important optical reasons. But we can fully agree with him as to entire misconception apparent in most supposed copies of Grecian architecture.

For his theory of the derivation of the Corinthian from the Grecian Doric, for which argument is derived from the capitals of the porches of the Tower of the Winds, he might have found additional reason in the presence of a Grecian Doric order in the interior of the same edifice. The recessing the faces of the ante, in the Erechtheion, which he finds difficulty in accounting for, was, we have always thought, in order to obviate the effect of width, from viewing two faces of an ante obliquely, as in the ante of the temple of Theseus—although it may have been the general method to make them of more unequal width.

But, notwithstanding we have noticed a few points in which Mr. Leeds seems to give impressions which were not intended, we have said enough to show that his work is really an important step towards the education of the public in architectural subjects, and contains matter of great interest to professors of the art.

#### LONDON HOUSES AND FIRE-PROOF STAIRS.

It is evident that the inhabitants of the great metropolis are almost ripe for an innovation on the present mode of constructing their houses; and the two grand reasons why such should take place are, 1st, the inconvenient extension of the suburbs, away into the country, and, 2nd, the great want of security against fire.

The obvious means of providing for the former evil is the adoption of the French and Scotch system of piling house upon house, the whole reached by one common staircase, and each occupying one floor, of adequate size; that is, for the intermediate floors, the ground-storey house having, where found expedient, the benefit of a front door and a portion of the sunk basement, and the uppermost square storey having the attics in addition; the remainder, or back portion of the basement, being set apart for a washhouse common to the several houses, and for coal-cellars for each. Having had long experience of the various modes of living in London, as regards house-taking, and suffered all the inconveniences attending those who have not occasion for solely occupying a large house in town, which may be mainly thus enumerated—

1. Taking the whole as tenant, with the chance of getting no sub-tenant, or what is worse, getting a bad one;
2. Taking a portion as sub-tenant, with the risk of becoming liable for the rent of the whole;
3. Taking a house, suitably small, in some suburb at an inconvenient distance, and with the fair chance of an uncongenial neighbourhood;—

I may be supposed competent to give an opinion as to the desirableness of a new class of dwellings springing up in London of the description to which I have alluded, and which opinion I do not hesitate to express in their favour. In doing so I am only adding my humble testimony to a mass of able arguments already brought forward from time to time in THE BUILDER.

As regards the second evil I have mentioned, many people in the north must have

very vague ideas on the subject of those ingenious contrivances, the "fire-escapes," of which they meet with descriptions in the London papers,—for there they have always been used to preventive instead of curative provisions; and it does seem that it would be more sensible, when legislators are laying down laws on such matters, if, instead of enacting that builders shall provide for the escape of obese citizens and dowagers, unused to gymnastics, over the tiles (I speak felinely), they would strike at the tap-root of the evil, and prohibit the use of wooden stairs, so that people might take a shorter and more decorous way of reaching terra-firma in safety. Were they to do so, we should soon be surprised and delighted with the competition which would arise amongst the inventive faculty.

London builders should be made acquainted with the external "turnpike-stairs" of Scotland. They are odd-looking things somewhat, but have yet a smack of good sense about them; and I should not fear to put them forward in competition with the internal "dog-legged" scale of the south. To my point, then: I would propose that in lieu of the usual two-flight wooden stairs which now occupy a portion of the posterior part of ordinary houses, the passage from the entrance door be extended through to the rear of the house, and lead to a projecting cylindrical staircase; this to be built of, say, 9-inch brick-work and the steps to be of stone, with a 5-inch solid newel wrought upon them; a quadrantal landing at the level of each floor; a door leading out at one side in the ground-storey; and a window in each revolution, looking towards the garden: such a stair might, with comfort, be as small as 3 feet 6 inches in the clear from the newel. It will be seen that with such stairs the back apartments would be of the same size as the front ones; or, as the cost of the house would be somewhat greater, the depth from front to rear might be subjected to a little reduction; since, what has to serve now as the length of the back apartments would become then their width.

It might be anticipated that were such a system to obtain, ready-made stone steps would become a commodity in the mason and stone merchant's trade; and they would by no means be confined to that trade, for they would come within the scope of the glazed earthenware manufacture, in which they could be made hollow, and ornamented under the nosings with panels containing flat arabesques, &c.

I may here mention a stair of this form which I had occasion some years ago to contrive, and which was carried successfully into effect. It was of a smaller size, and for a more ordinary purpose than that which I have above proposed; the steps were treads only, having the risers open for light and air; they were formed of Caithness flagging—an exceedingly hard stone, known in town as Rock-hill paving, and used in thicknesses similar to Valencia or Bangor slate: they had only to be outlined to the radiating shape, with a circular part, say 4½-inch in diameter for the newel, and the centre of this part perforated for an iron rod, say 1 inch square: the newel was made up with short pieces of 4½-inch cast-iron pipe, one of which, with a tread, making the height of a step. From the foundation-stone of the newel, at the level of the floor, sprung the 1-inch-square rod, and over this were let down a piece of pipe and a tread alternately, until the required height was attained, when the standard of the iron railing at top landing was screwed on to the newel rod, with a washer intervening, the whole being thus rendered staunch and complete. The pieces of pipe were secured in a position coincident with each other, and concentric with the rod, by means of wooden plugs: the building of the cylindrical stair-wall progressed with the setting of the steps. How simply and economically could a stair for common purposes be thus made with earthenware treads and newels, and 4½ inch walling of well bricks!

I do not wish to occupy space with irrelevant suggestions, but would merely further state my conviction on these subjects, that no other course will lead to any practical reform, but to "agitate—agitate—agitate."

JAMES WYLLON.

#### SCENIC EXHIBITIONS.

*The Cycloorama of Lisbon.*—We have already described the fine hall erected by Mr. Bradwell, adjoining the Colosseum, in Albany-street, for this exhibition, with its painted ceilings, Ionic columns, friezes, mural decorations, and elegant boxes. Since then we have had the opportunity of seeing the colossal moving picture of Lisbon, and the destruction of the city by earthquake. A fearful event was that, which occurred now nearly a hundred years ago (1755), and right forcibly is it brought before the eye and mind of the spectator in this very clever work, painted by the Messrs. Danson, from Mr. Bradwell's designs. The Tagus, calm and beautiful; the Irish Nunnery, St. Jerome's Convent, the Carmelites, and the city in all its elegance, open to view, and we are reminded (with Byron)—

"What beauties doth Lisbon first unfold,  
Her image floating on the noble tide,  
Which poets vainly pave with sands of gold."

How the sky is obscured, the vessels are hurled to and fro, the city falls, and all is made to seem one mighty chaos, we will not pretend to describe. Suffice it to say, that it is a most effective production, and almost as exciting as the fearful reality itself. The principal buildings in the city are beautifully and forcibly painted, but, if we must be critical, we would say that the distances would be the better for a little more air, and the figures which enliven the streets for a little more body.

*Burford's Paesorama, Pompeii.*—While Mr. Bradwell gives us the imburnation of one city, Mr. Burford brings before the London public the exhumation of another. Buried 1769 years ago by the ashes from Vesuvius, Pompeii has been preserved, a fly in amber, for our examination and study; and those who have not been there themselves have reason to thank Mr. Burford and Mr. Selous for giving them so truthful and vivid a representation of this wonderful place. It would have been better if Mr. Burford had indicated the extent of the recent excavations, instead of making the present view an exact repetition of that which was exhibited by him in the Strand in 1823, the description and engraving of which we happen at this moment to have before us. Still this is perhaps of little real consequence, and shall not lead us to qualify our admiration of the painting. In the large gallery, (Pompeii, we should say, is in the small one), Vienna (a charming view), is still exhibited.

*The Lyceum Theatre.*—The production of Mr. Planche's Christmas extravaganza "The King of the Peacocks," one of the most signal and deserved successes which even this fortunate as well as able author ever achieved, has given Mr. Beverly another opportunity to display his ability as a painter. The opening scene "The Chateau de la Beaute, in the verdant valley," has that beautiful effect of atmosphere for which so many of Mr. Beverly's pictures are remarkable. Some glimpses of the sea in after scenes are exceedingly clever, and the "Old World's End," though "a view beyond the bounds of probability," is an artistic "thunder and lightning" sketch, shewing no ordinary knowledge of effect. The last scene, as a piece of stage mechanism, with a view to the production of beautiful combinations of form and colour, has never been surpassed.

*The Haymarket Theatre.*—Here, too, for the Christmas piece, "Camalazaman and Baidoura," a very clever burlesque of a well known story in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," the painter, Mr. Phillips, has been at work, and in some cases very efficiently. The sky and distance in the second scene (to go no farther), are most artistically treated. It interested us to find throughout the piece the reflect of many of those views it has been our duty to urge and spread. Joking allusions to the value of good drains; the absurdity and danger of retaining a cattle market in the city; the manner in which the Vernon Gallery has been put into the shade; and the importance of opening public monuments to the people, were at once seen and marked by the audience.

**FIRE IN NEW YORK.**—On the 19th ult., 22 houses, with 20 omnibuses, and 154 horses, were destroyed by fire, with a total loss estimated at 200,000 dollars.